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# DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT IN THE BOARD ROOM

**Penningtons Manches Cooper LLP**  
**Housing Diversity Network**

# Your team today



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# Agenda

- Setting the scene
- Why is equality, diversity and inclusion important?
- Drivers for change
- Unconscious bias
- Discussion



# SETTING THE SCENE



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# What is diversity?

- **Diversity** refers to the presence of people who, as a group, have a wide range of characteristics, seen and unseen, which they were born with or have acquired. These characteristics may include their gender identity, race or ethnicity, LGBTQ+ status, disability status, and more.

# What is inclusion?

- **Inclusion** is where people's **differences are valued** and used to enable everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive working environment is one in which **everyone feels that they belong without having to conform**, that **their contribution matters** and they are able to **perform to their full potential**, no matter their background, identity or circumstances. An inclusive workplace has fair policies and practices in place and **enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively**.

# Diversity in the Sector

- **According to the Inside Housing survey conducted in 2021, from the organisations that responded, how many had all-white executive teams??**
  - a) 36
  - b) 41
  - c) 62
  - d) 84

# Diversity in the Sector

- **Based on the same survey respondents, how many associations said they had all white boards?**
  - a) 14
  - b) 25
  - c) 38
  - d) 52



# Diversity in the Sector

- **Based on the same survey respondents, what percentage of board members were women?**
  - a) 14%
  - b) 26%
  - c) 53%
  - d) 41%



# Diversity in the Sector

- **Based on the same survey respondents, what proportion of housing association board members identify as LGBT?**
  - a) 1.6%
  - b) 2.6%
  - c) 3.1%
  - d) 4.2%



# Diversity in the Sector

- **What proportion of housing association board members identify as living with a disability?**
  - a) 1.6%
  - b) 4.9%
  - c) 3.1%
  - d) 2.7%



***“Why is diversity  
and inclusion  
important?”***



# DRIVERS FOR CHANGE



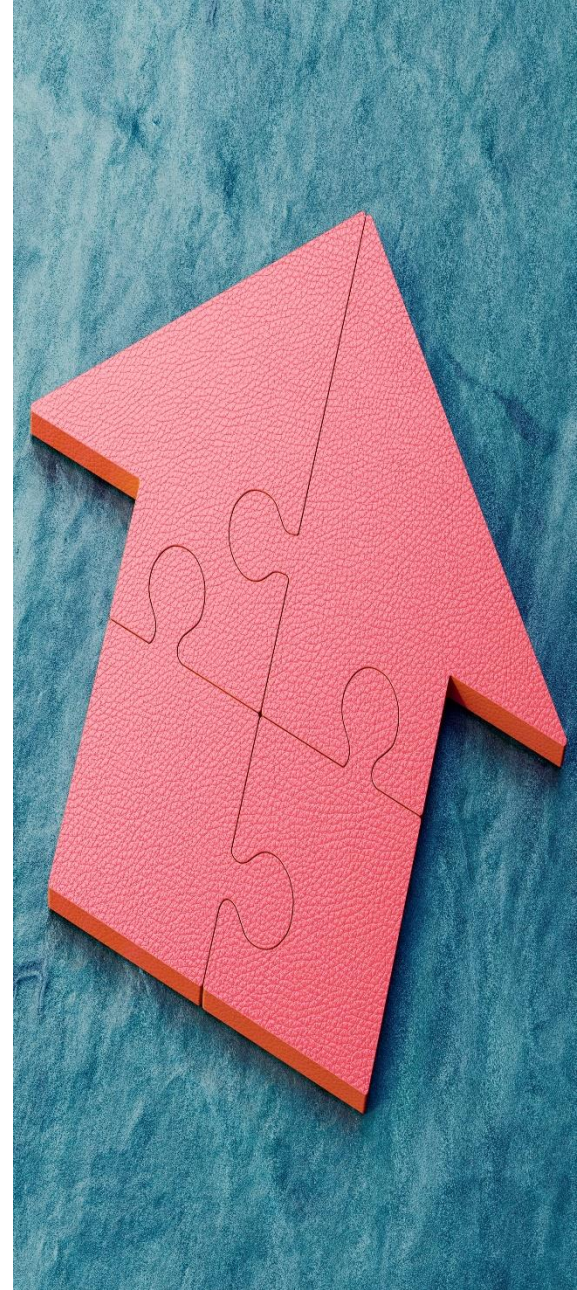
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# Drivers

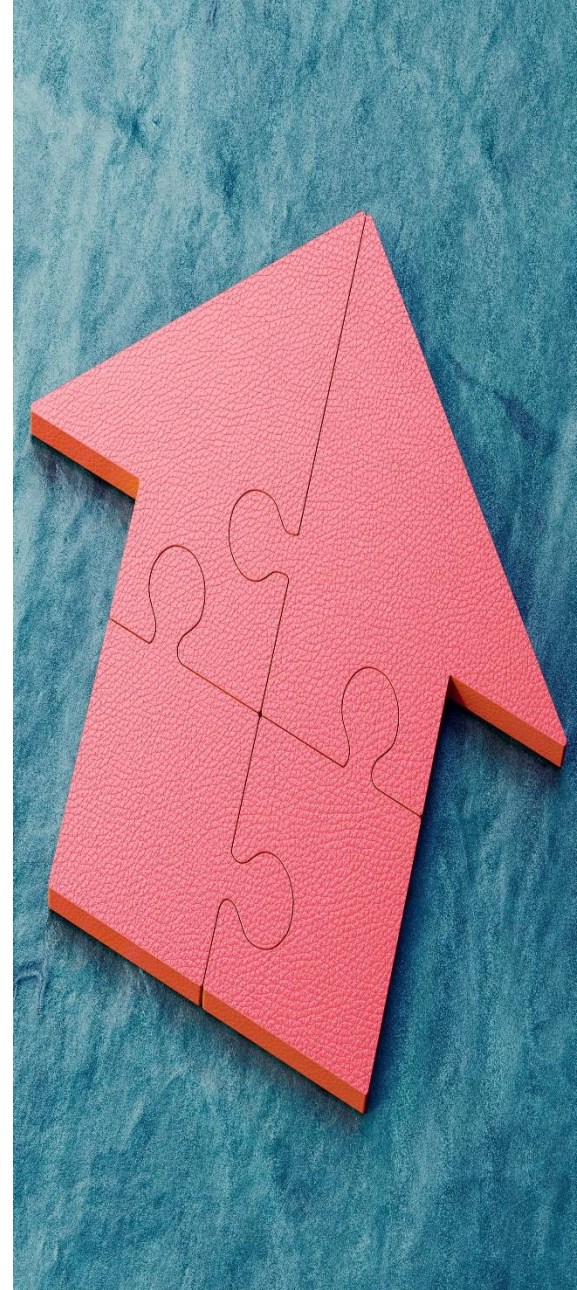
- Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998
- Black Lives Matter
- Governance and Financial Viability Standard
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard:

*“...demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.”*



# Drivers

- Social Housing (Green and) White Paper
- Sector Risk Profile
- NHF Code of Governance 2020
- Legal, moral and economic arguments



# Initiatives in the sector

- Sector schemes e.g. Leadership 2025
- Designated board roles e.g. under 30
- Shadow / junior boards
- Equality and diversity working group(s)
- Reverse mentoring
- Impact assessments





# UNCONSCIOUS BIAS



# What is Unconscious Bias?

- Every time you make a decision, your social background, personal and cultural values, and life experiences influence your reasoning
- This can lead to a form of **unconscious bias**, also known as **implicit bias**, which unfairly influences decision making (e.g. recruitment)
- While it is important to use your experience to make decisions, **it is a problem** when you are **influenced too heavily** by your assumptions, expectations, and preferences

# 8 common types of unconscious bias

Type	Definition
Name bias	<b>a preference for someone based on their name</b> . It can lead to you making assumptions about their race or background for example.
Affinity bias	unconsciously preferring people who <b>share similar background or qualities with you or someone you admire</b>
Beauty bias	unconsciously <b>linking “appearance”</b> (physical features/expression/attractiveness) <b>with “personality”</b> (skills, ability to do the job) – they don’t always match!
Conformity bias	<b>when your views are swayed too much by those of other people</b>
Confirmation bias	unconsciously <b>searching for bits of evidence that back up (confirm) your first impressions/opinions (good or bad)</b> , rather than looking at the whole picture
Gender bias	unconscious preference for one gender over the other - stemming from our <b>deep-seated beliefs about gender roles and stereotypes</b>
Halo effect	which occurs when we <b>focus on one particularly great feature about a person</b> – similar to affinity and confirmation bias, it makes us overlook other information & negative aspects – can blind you to reality and skew your opinion
Horns effect	the opposite of the halo effect: you <b>focus on one particularly negative feature about a person</b> , which clouds your view of their other qualities



# How to overcome your unconscious bias

- Unconscious bias training
- We all have biases - be honest with yourself!
- Take your time to make your decisions
  - avoid snap judgements
  - keep an open mind & look for varied to back up your assessment
  - fully assess the information you are provided
  - write down your opinions/assessment
  - question your biases at all stages & ask others to challenge you



# Discussion

- How can and do we lead recruitment as Board members to achieve a more diverse Board?
- How do we maximise the use of Board Members' diverse skills in decision-making?
- What will I take back for myself and my Board from today's session?



# Questions and contact us



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